


WITSELL (A. W. W. W.)

DRAWER

19A

Artists-T.

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Artists of Abraham Lincoln portraits

Asa Weston Twitchell

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

7/10

Am

American Central Life
Insurance Company
Indianapolis

OFFICE OF
HERBERT M. WOOLLEN, PRESIDENT

ESTABLISHED 1899

July 7, 1933

Enclosed is a letter from Mrs. Mary Sullivan which will be perfectly clear to you.

Probably neither of you may know her. She is the widow of Cornelius Sullivan who, until last year, was a very prominent and successful corporation lawyer in New York.

She has had the leisure and funds to develop her natural artistic gifts and is, I think, regarded today as one of the authorities on modern art in New York. Strange as it may seem, she is from Indianapolis and has a most excellent standing here both artistically and personally. She is the head of an organization of the Art Institute known as the "The Gamboliers" which, out of its funds, annually buys modern pictures, hangs them in the local Art Institute, gives to the Art Institute what it wants of the collection and distributes the remaining pictures among the members who have contributed.

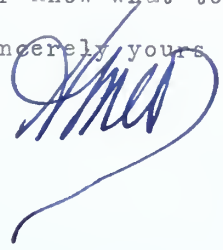
In addition to being a friend of mine, she is a friend of Evans Woollen and plenty of other people around the village.

I hesitate to give her a letter of introduction to you even on the subject she mentions without information that you would care to see what she has to offer. Her standing is such that I am sure she would offer nothing that she did not believe to be both valuable and authentic.

If you wish to contact with her you are at liberty so far as I am concerned to proceed to do so on the arrival of this letter. On the other hand, if you prefer it, just return her letter and tell me what you want done and I shall be glad to perform it.

In any event I wish you would be good enough to let me know what you want me to do so I may let her know what to do.

Sincerely yours



HMW LL
Encl.

Mr. Arthur F. Hall and
Mr. Franklin B. Mead
c/o Lincoln National Life Ins. Co.
Ft. Wayne, Indiana



①

57 EAST 56TH STREET

July 28-33

Mr. Arthur F. Hall
The Lincoln National Life Co.
Fort Wayne Indiana.

LINCOLN LIFE

Referred to

Ans'd

Answered

OFFICE OF PRESIDENT

Dear Mr. Hall,

For a long time I have had a deep respect for the vision which resulted in the great figure of Lincoln as a young man by Paul Mauship which distinguishes your building in Fort Wayne.

So when a fine portrait of Lincoln was brought to me for sale I wrote to an old friend Mr. Herbert Woolley to ask if



②

he thought that you or your company would be interested in having it. He kindly replied giving me your address & suggesting that I write you about it.

My own interest lies in the art field rather than the historical one. I am a founder & trustee of The Museum of Modern Art in New York City. and have since my youth had affiliations with The John Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis. It is less than a year ago & since the death of my husband that I began to earn my living on the basis of art knowledge &



③ experience. I say this only to qualify as to the importance of the Lincoln portrait as a painting and work of art - in addition to its historical significance

It was painted by an Albany portrait painter - Asa Weston Twitchell. He was a great admirer of Lincoln & took every opportunity to meet him & hear him speak. He made many studies & sketches from life - and from these he painted the portrait.



(A) Until a few weeks ago it has been in the possession of the daughter of the artist. She always refused to part with it - some years ago refused an offer of \$8000 for it. Now old & ill she sold it a man whom she knew. He brought a photograph of it to me - & at my enthusiasm brought me the portrait itself. & has given me the exclusive opportunity to sell it.

I think it is a magnificent portrait - painted by a fine portrait painter who appreciated



⑤ The nobility & greatness of Lincoln.
I have had the dust & grime
of decades in Albany washed off
the canvas, & a light protective
varnish put on.

It would be difficult to - in fact
I hope I never will try to sell
anything that I did not
believe in completely & from
every point of view -

And each time that I see this
portrait I am more deeply
impressed by it - There is
the greatness of Lincoln in
its simplicity & strength &



(6)

nobility.

I have a letter from the daughter about the portrait - which I asked to have signed by a notary - also a letter by the artist - telling of his education & work - & of many other portraits of important contemporary men which hang in public buildings. a photograph of the artist & a self-portrait painted after the Lincoln -

I gathered these for I think they should be framed & hung



(7)

with the portrait in some public building - documented for all future time. For I believe that more & more Lincoln will lead as the greatest figure in American history.

The painting has not been offered as yet to anyone else. It came to my mind immediately that it is & always will be of importance as the Mauship figure - and perhaps I hold a hope too that it may go



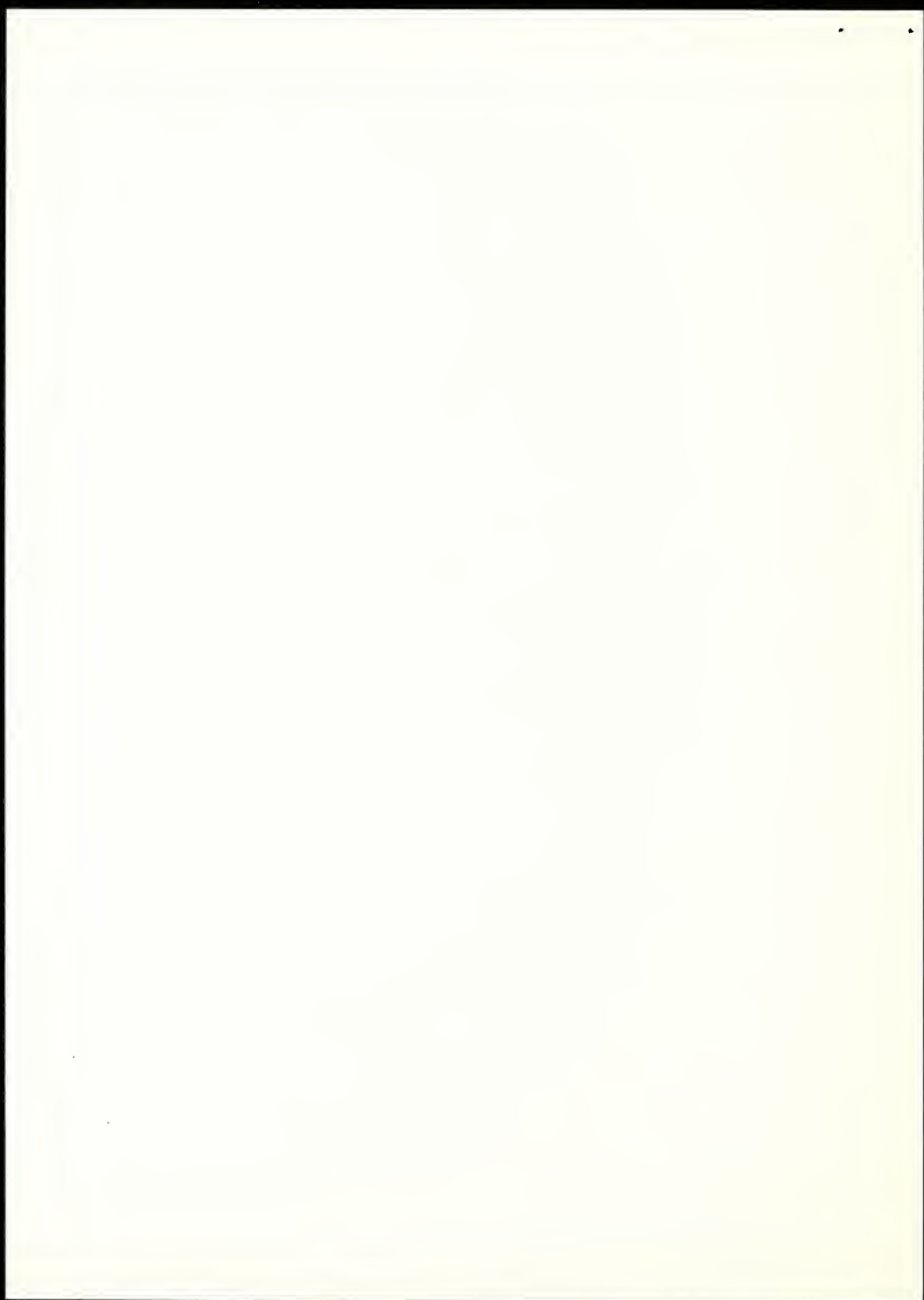
⑧ to my own state. which has
a share in his tradition.

The owner of the portrait
has been asking \$10 000 for it -
My arrangement is that I
will have 10% of the sale
price. I have urged him
to lower the price - as I
know he will accept much less.
to which he answers - Make
me an offer. If not certain
he will sell for a third less -
or even more.

(a)

He insists that if he holds it until the financial situation is better - that being what it is - it can only increase in value.

This probably will seem an unsatisfactory statement about the price - but I would like it to go to Indiana - to a public institution & not to the oblivion of a collector - and so I ask that if you are interested, that now having the facts, you write me whether or not you are interested in



(10) it.

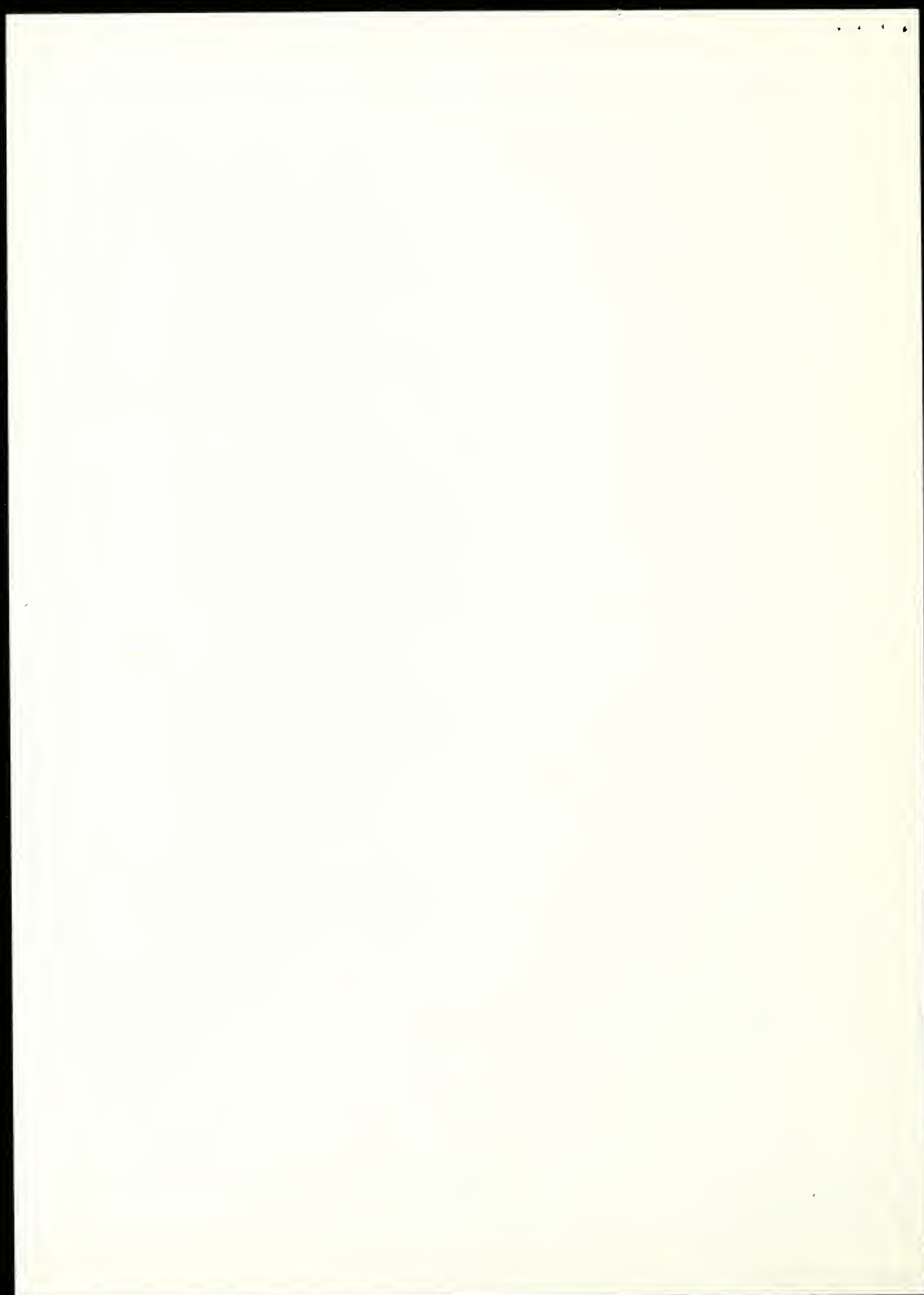
I can have the portrait sent out to you - if you are seriously interested to see it. The photograph does not suggest the richness of the color - nor the fine painting -

And forgive me for this long letter, if it is of no interest to you.

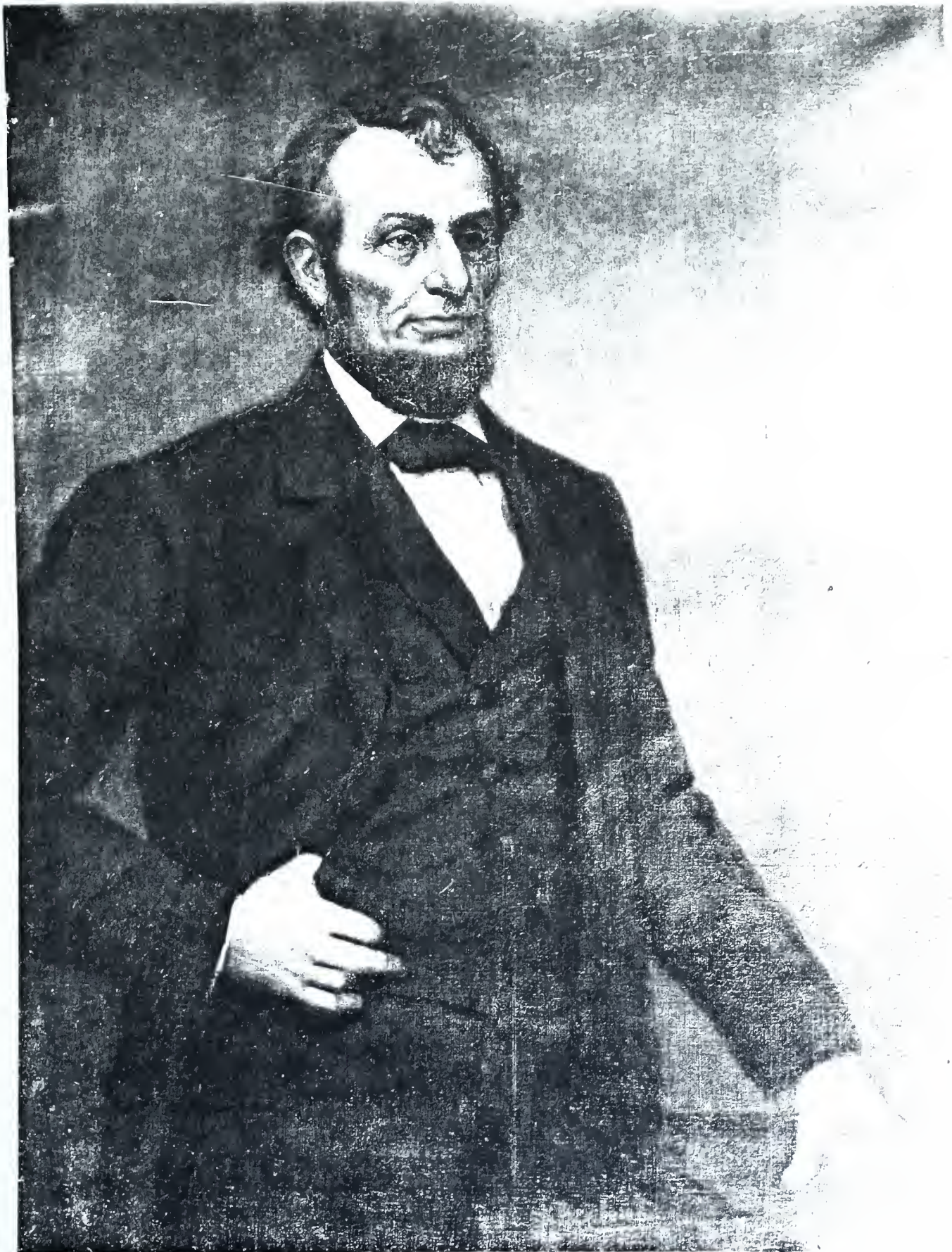
Sincerely yours

Mary Sullivan

(Mrs. Cornelius J.)



PHOTOCOPY
(original in safe)



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

ASA WESTON TWITCHELL (1820-1904)
N. A. 1854

STYLE: In oil

QUALITY: Exceptionally fine

CONDITION: Excellent

DIMENSIONS: On canvass, 40" x 54" high

DESCRIPTION: More than life size; figure three-quarter length, standing more than three-quarters to the right and looking straight ahead in the same direction. The left hand with index finger pointed out, rests on table with scarlet cloth. Thumb of right hand is held in vest pocket. Hazel eyes, black hair, brownish beard; black suit and tie, white shirt and turnover collar. Scarlet tablecloth and dark greenish brown background.

SOURCE: The painting belonged to Miss E. Josephine Twitchell, the artist's daughter, who writes as follows:

"The portrait of ABRAHAM LINCOLN was photographed by the Frick Art Reference Library and was painted in 1865 by my father, ARA WESTON TWITCHELL (1820-1904) honorary member of the National Academy in 1854. He was a great admirer of Mr. Lincoln and made sketches of him at every opportunity when Lincoln appeared in public and from which he painted this portrait."

BIOGRAPHY: Asa Weston Twitchell was born in Swansea, New Hampshire January 1, 1820, and died at Albany, New York, in 1904. For almost sixty years Mr. Twitchell was considered the finest portrait painted in his locality and had many offers to come to New York and open a studio. In fact, Thurlow Weed, the celebrated journalist guaranteed him a year's employment in New York. While he did not accept this offer, he came to New York and painted Mr. Weed's portrait in addition to many other leading men of his time, as well as Arch-Bishop Hughes, also George D. Morgan, a cousin of the Civil War governor of New York. In the Common Council Gallery of governors at Albany hang the likenesses of the following governors which he painted from life: Young, Hunt, Fish, Clark, Tilden and Seymour.

In the Court of Appeals are the portraits painted by him of the following judges: Ira Harris, Amasa J. Parker, Miller, Jones, Hand, Gardner and Hunt and in the State Library is an excellent life-size portrait of Chancellor Walworth. Here also are excellent portraits of Governors Marcy, Fenton and Chancellor Pier-son, also Chief Justice Field, and Governor Hill.

Mr. Twitchell has painted the following men and their families: Stephen Van Rensselaer, Sheriff Archer, Daniel Frye, Jesse Potts, Dr. Nott of Union College, Judge Spencer, John C. Spencer, and George D. Carpenter.

He was a close friend and associate of the following well known artists in Albany; Erastus Dow Palmer, the sculptor, Homer D. Martin, Edward Gay, the two brothers William and James Hart, Warren Eaton, Leonard Ochtman, who still lives at Coscob, New York, the celebrated painter George H. Boughton, Alexander H. Wyant, Charles Loring Elliott, the portrait painter, Fred Remington and many others.

The asking price is 10,000
I am certain the owner would
take less now, but hesitate to
write a definite lower figure.
An offer above 5,000 will I feel
certain be favorably considered.
Perhaps I ought not to write
this but I do hope the
painting will go to Indiana

Mary Sullivan

All original
documents & a self portrait of the
painter is included.

July 11, 1933
Dict. July 10

My dear Herb:

I am just in receipt of your letter of the 7th enclosing letter from Mrs. Sullivan which I am returning.

I am not inclined to believe that we will be interested in a high-priced portrait of Lincoln. Lots of them have been offered to us and we have never purchased one yet; however, if Mrs. Sullivan wants to write to me about it, I am perfectly willing to have her do so -- but if you can, I should like to have you drop her the hint that now is a very poor time indeed to try to sell a life insurance company anything that it does not absolutely need.

Sincerely,

Mr. Herbert M. Woollen, President
American Central Life Ins. Co.
Indianapolis, Indiana

AFH:MD
Enc.

August 7, 1933

Mrs. Cornelius J. Sullivan
57 East 56th Street
New York, New York

Dear Madam:

In the absence of Mr. Hall your very interesting letter with reference to the Twitchell painting has come to my desk.

While we agree with all the fine things you have said about the picture and its desirability, yet I am very frank to say that our budget in this Department has been cut to the minimum so that we would not be in any position to make an offer for the painting at present.

We should be very glad, however, to keep your information and photograph of the picture on file so that in case we should care to enter into negotiations with you again at some other time, we will have the data before us.

We also have a great many inquiries for Lincoln pictures and paintings here and it is possible we might interest some of the parties in the work.

Very sincerely yours,

Director
LAW:LEH Lincoln Historical Research Foundation



[NUMBER 91]

ASA WESTON TWITCHELL, N.A.

AMERICAN: 1820-1904

91. *ABRAHAM LINCOLN*. At three-quarter length, in black coat and waistcoat; the left hand resting upon a crimson-covered table. Dark greenish brown background.

54 x 40 inches

Painted in 1865 from sketches made from life

Collection of Miss E. Josephine Twitchell, Slingerlands, Albany Co., New York, daughter of the artist

With an affidavit by Miss E. Josephine Twitchell, dated June 5, 1933, in which she states that the above portrait "was painted in 1865 by my father . . . He was a great admirer of Mr Lincoln and made sketches of him at every opportunity when Mr Lincoln appeared in public and from which he painted this portrait."

Collection of Mrs Cornelius G Sullivan
Back Barnet 46
Sullivan
New York

Sale Dec 6 1939

WITCHELL, AL. 1950

DRAWER

19A

Artists-T.

